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**To:** [Yun, Joseph](#); [Cowin, Mark](#); [Billington, Tracie](#); [Landis, Paula](#);  
[Hoffmann, William](#);  
**cc:** [Dooley, Michelle M.](#);  
**Subject:** Responses to scoring of South Sierra IRWMP application  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 14, 2010 3:55:54 PM

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Dear DWR staff:

As the main person responsible for the South Sierra region's IRWMP application, I would like to challenge the result of the grant evaluation and ask for a reconsideration of the recommendation to deny funding.

It is difficult to determine exactly why the grant scored so poorly based on the comments provided in the evaluation. But it appears that the reviewers thought that many of the activities proposed were unnecessary for the development of an IRWMP and that there was not sufficient detail in the application to justify these extraneous proposed activities.

In fact, the SSIRWMP's application did address the GOAL of the IRWM program -'to encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources'. We proposed what DWR has says that it wants - a way of bringing the stakeholders in the region together to collaboratively share resources, educate one another and come up with integrated strategies for resource management. Perhaps the reviewers were overly focused on the primary OBJECTIVE of the grant program, to create IRWMPs for as many regions as possible. Over the two year process that we worked on the SSIRMWP application, we identified those strategies that would help us achieve the goal, at the same time that we were achieving this objective. Our approach was not a cookie-cutter IRWMP plan development, but we, perhaps more than any other region, developed and modeled a collaborative, pragmatic approach that we felt would bring about the best results in regional water management.

It appears that the reviewers did not appreciate this approach and possibly did not fully understand it. This is not surprising - they had a lot of grants to score and may not have had an understanding of the special needs of our region. But what is particularly disappointing is that this approach was specifically discussed with the IRWMP Program Officers with direct questions about whether it was appropriate for the grant application. We were never led to believe that it was the wrong way to go and never advised to leave the 'extraneous activities' out. There are other aspects of the scoring that also seem to indicate that the IRWMP program officers did not communicate well to the scoring team. For instance, we have e-mails

verifying that a 26 month time period for the grant (24 months for the program and 2 months for final reports and invoices) would be acceptable, yet we lost points on the scoring for this.

The purpose of the IRWM Plans is to promote regional water management project and activities. In many regions the IRWMP is primarily needed to allow the stakeholders to pursue IRWM Implementation funding. In that case, the focus on developing a plan which prioritized projects makes sense. In the South Sierra region there are few if any resources to draft an IRWM Implementation grant, even if there were funding to develop feasibility studies and project plans. Our best opportunities for promoting regional management will come from sharing resources and developing collaborative policies. This is why our workplan included so much regional education and collaboration-building. As previously stated, it appears that the reviewers did not understand the value of this approach in a region such as ours.

I have recently had several grants scored by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. They went through a multi-tiered approach, including review by the region's program officer (who presumably knows about the issues and needs of the region), review by all of the other program officers (to try to avoid bias), and site visits for as many applications as possible (to get a firsthand look at the realities on the ground), and meeting with all of the program officers to assure consistency in applying the scoring criteria. I cannot help feeling that the DWR process was not as comprehensive or fair. I would appreciate if there was at least some review of our applications score to determine that fair and appropriate criteria were used.

Thank you for your attention.

Elissa Brown  
Grant Writing Consultant